PRESIDENCY FOR DUMMIES

If Hillary and Donald can run for President, why shouldn't you?

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE GAME

Congratulations! You are the President of the world's foremost economic and military superpower, the United States of America.

Your aim is to achieve peace and prosperity, and to avoid economic crises at home and military conflicts abroad. You are responsible not just for the United States and its own prosperity, but also for peace and order in the whole world. Sorry, but there's no way to escape your responsibility for foreign affairs, and no way to insulate the USA from the rest of the world.

The game covers the years from 1977 to 2024, a dramatic period in the history of the United States and the rest of the world. Almost everything has changed (or will change) during that time. But for better or for worse? That depends on your decisions, as you are about to take part in writing the annals of history.

To make your task a whole lot easier, the game leaves you mostly free from arguing with Congress. From time to time you will need to decide whether it's worth vetoing a proposal for a controversial new law. Be very careful on those occasions and think very hard about whether or not you should veto the law.

ELECTIONS AND GAME MODES

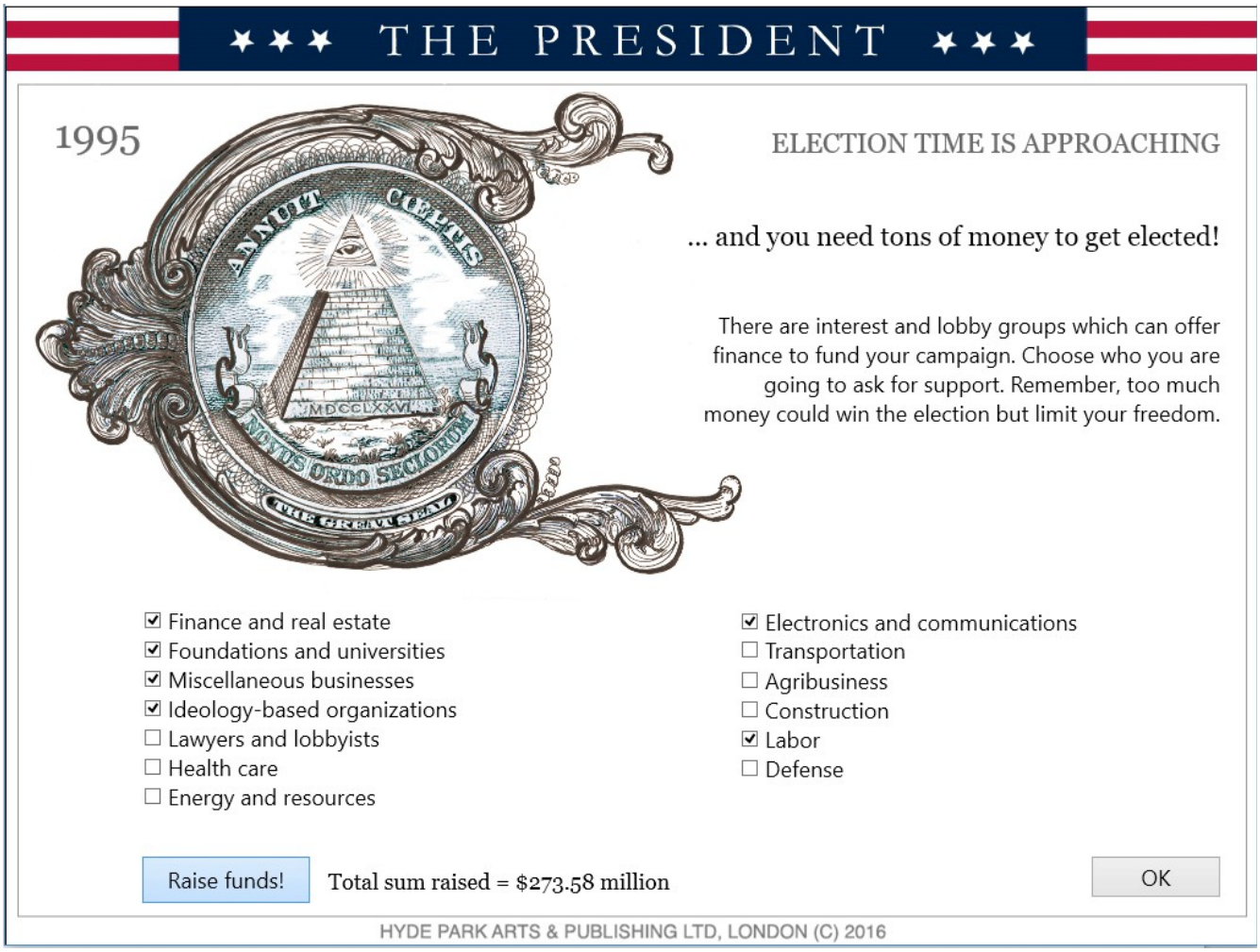
The game has two modes: (1) regular mode with presidential elections; (2) training mode with elections disabled. You cannot enter the Hall of Fame if you play in training mode.

In regular mode, presidential elections are held every four years, and you are required to identify your affiliation: Republican or Democrat. (Sorry, independents and libertarians, your time is yet to come.)

In each election, you run as a Republican or Democratic candidate. Note that real names and pictures of the candidates are used through 2016, but starting with the 2020 election, mathematically extrapolated candidates will run for the presidency. (Who will that be exactly? Play to find it out.)

How to win an election:

(1) Gather enough funding from your Party sponsors or Political Action Committees. Just tick the boxes and you will get the money – it couldn't easier! There is a downside, however: if you get too much money, your political independence is compromised. You will no longer be completely free to make political decisions according to your conscience and the best of your knowledge.


THE PRESIDENT
1995
ELECTION TIME IS APPROACHING
... and you need tons of money to get elected!
There are interest and lobby groups which can offer finance to fund your campaign. Choose who you are going to ask for support. Remember, too much money could win the election but limit your freedom.
Finance and real estate
Foundations and universities
Miscellaneous businesses
Ideology-based organizations
Lawyers and lobbyists
Health care
Energy and resources
Electronics and communications
Transportation
Agribusiness
Construction
Labor
Defense
Raise funds!
Total sum raised = $273.58 million
OK
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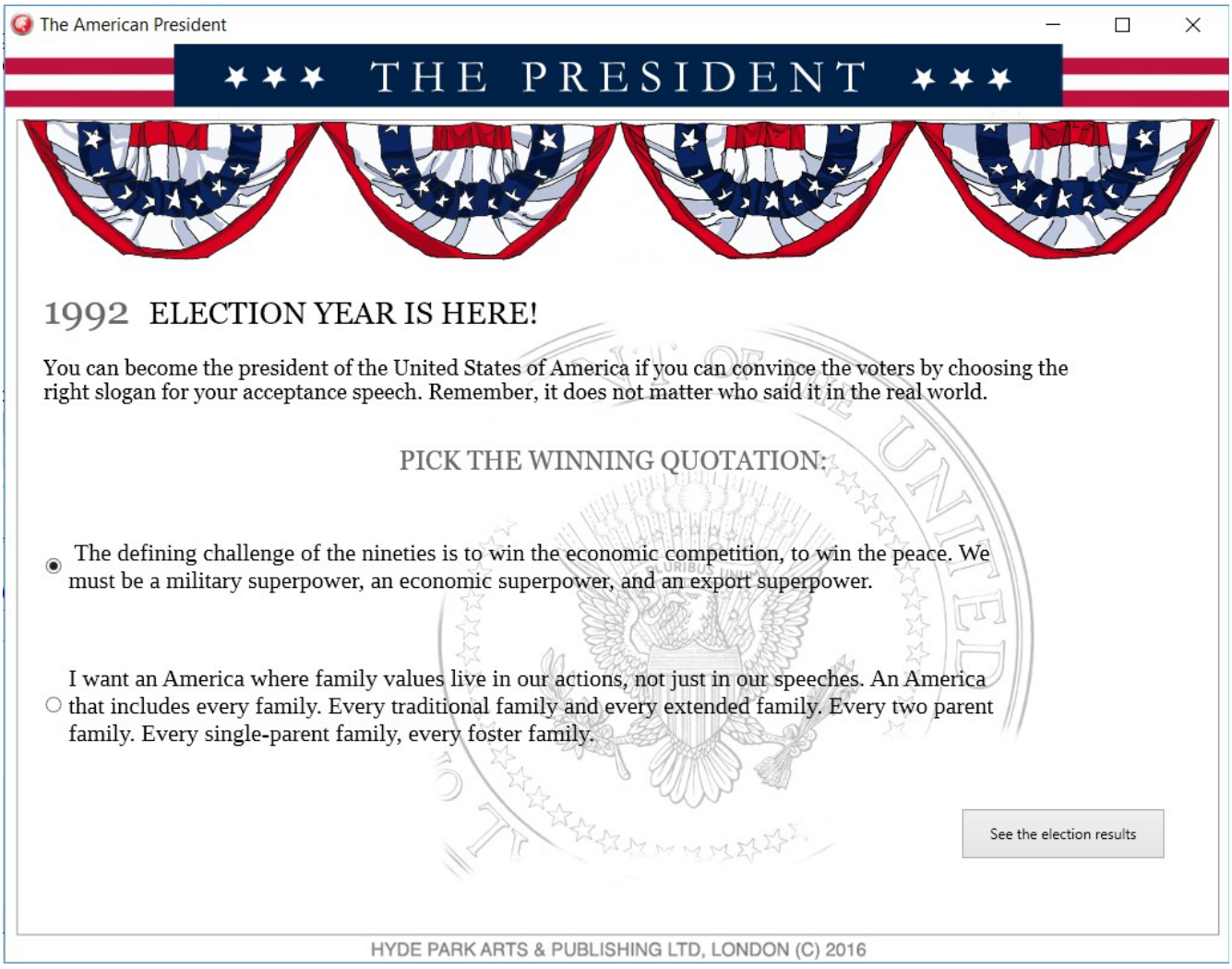
So we recommend getting enough money for the campaign, but not too much, so that you are able to maintain a healthy balance between freedom and finance.

(2) Through 2016, you will need to select the right statement from the acceptance speech by the candidate who won the election in the particular year. All of the quotations are real – each one did actually appear in the acceptance speech of a real-world candidate.

Note that your affiliation does not matter: your task is to identify the winning quotation regardless of who actually said it. For instance, in 1979, you should pick Ronald Reagan's statement even if you despise Republicans. Vice versa, you need to pick Bill Clinton's quotation in 1991 even if you've always hated Clinton and the Democratic Party.

If you win the election, you are inaugurated as President and will run the country for the next four years. If you lose, you can only observe what your more capable opponent is doing during his or her term in office.

To make your task a lot easier, you don't have to argue too much with Congress. From time to time you will need to decide whether or not to veto a proposal for a controversial new law. Be very careful on these occasions!


The American President
THE PRESIDENT
1992 ELECTION YEAR IS HERE!
You can become the president of the United States of America if you can convince the voters by choosing the right slogan for your acceptance speech. Remember, it does not matter who said it in the real world.
PICK THE WINNING QUOTATION:
The defining challenge of the nineties is to win the economic competition, to win the peace. We must be a military superpower, an economic superpower, and an export superpower.
I want an America where family values live in our actions, not just in our speeches. An America that includes every family. Every traditional family and every extended family. Every two parent family. Every single-parent family, every foster family.
See the election results
HYDE PARK ARTS & PUBLISHING LTD, LONDON (C) 2016

POLICY TOOLS

The **Federal budget** is the main tool for achieving your goals. You can run deficits to smooth out short-term economic turbulence, but you must avoid going too far into debt. You can change the expenditure in individual chapters, but it is better to avoid extremes. You can hike or cut three types of income tax rates (a significant simplification compared to the real world) and increase or decrease various expenditure chapters of the Federal budget.

A budget deficit is a sure-fire way of stimulating growth and making voters happy. The natural downside is government debt, which must of course be paid off in the future. Sooner or later, austerity measures have to be taken before the debt spins out of control – and you can be pretty sure that you will not find voters who are overly fond of austerity anywhere in the world. Not even in the USA. So if you do feel compelled to use "debt medicine" – for example to fix ailing public infrastructure or to improve healthcare – do it wisely.

Note that you have no influence on **inflation** as the Federal Reserve System, the US monetary authority, is an independent entity. The President cannot change interest rates or inflation.

From time to time, a proposal for an especially important law appears. Think long and hard as to whether you are going to **veto** the proposals or sign them into law.

Last but not least, you must make other **decisions concerning policy and strategy** of the United States of America. You are advised to learn something about Russia, the Middle East, Afghanistan and other sensitive parts of the world before taking a history-making decision!

THE MAIN MENU

The main menu has seven choices or tabs. The 'Administration' tab will be explained later as it consists of six sub-tabs.

Intelligence

Most of the news you are briefed on relates to important events. Many of them require a decision from you. You can't continue until you have decided 'Yes' or 'No'. Even though no complex or structural decisions are needed, decision making is no easy task! (Hint: By clicking the 'More Intelligence' button you can find a lot of important information to help you with your decision.)

Some events are real, some are fictitious, and the game allows for multiple alternative histories. This event is, fortunately, a fictitious one:

Taxes

There are only three tax rates in the game:

- *Income tax for the richest 5 per cent*
- *Income tax for other individuals: the rest of us*
- *Corporate income tax rate*

This is a huge simplification compared to the variety of rates and income brackets in the real economy. But the taxation model used in this game still reflects some important features of the Federal tax system. (Which features? Play and find out.)

Outlays

National Defense: Self-explanatory.

Health care: Also self-explanatory. We have left out intricacies such as Obamacare, etc.

Social Security: The old-age pay-as-you-go pension system. This is a mandatory item, which means this expenditure item is a legal requirement. Major reform is unlikely to occur during your presidency. Social Security cannot, therefore, be touched.

Other Welfare: Public education, social services, veteran benefits, unemployment benefits, food stamps, etc.

Physical Resources: Energy, natural resources, environment, commerce and housing credit, regional development.

Net Interest: The interest that is paid on Federal debt. Note that you must pay the interest, otherwise a credit default of the Federal Government would occur. A mandatory item: don't even think about touching it.

Science and technology: Self-explanatory. Note that one of the USA's main strengths has always been its edge in hi-tech.

Other: There is a variety of other Federal outlays for different functions of the Federal Government. Justice, agriculture, the diplomatic service, general administration, and running the White House, among others.

You can change all outlay categories – to some extent – except for Social Security and net interest, which are mandatory and thus non-negotiable. Note that changing some categories may have an impact on national security. Your task is to seek a balance that will guarantee both prosperity and security.

You do not actually need to touch the Outlays controls at all. In that case, the game will use real data through 2016 and extrapolated data thereafter.

Economy

In the upper part of the panel, you will see a useful list of macro-economic indicators.

The bottom segment indicates estimated receipts and projected outlays for the following year. Hint: an increased deficit can boost economic growth (or real GDP), but at the cost of federal debt. Note that you must pay interest on the debt.

Charts

All charts are based on Gross Domestic Product or GDP. This is the most closely followed economic statistic as it reflects living standards and is a measure of a country's overall power. Power means both soft power (how attractive a country is to foreigners) and hard, military

power.

GDP and debt: Both in current prices, which means not adjusted for inflation.

*Real GDP: Gross Domestic Product adjusted for inflation – this is **the** GDP that is most closely followed by economists, politicians and journalists.*

Debt to GDP: A very important ratio. Too much debt is a burden that debilitates the economy. On the other hand, austere policies that aim to maintain balanced budgets at all times and pay down the debt can also hurt the economy. Find the golden middle way!

World GDP: The US economy as a share of world GDP. The higher the share, the more powerful America is.

About

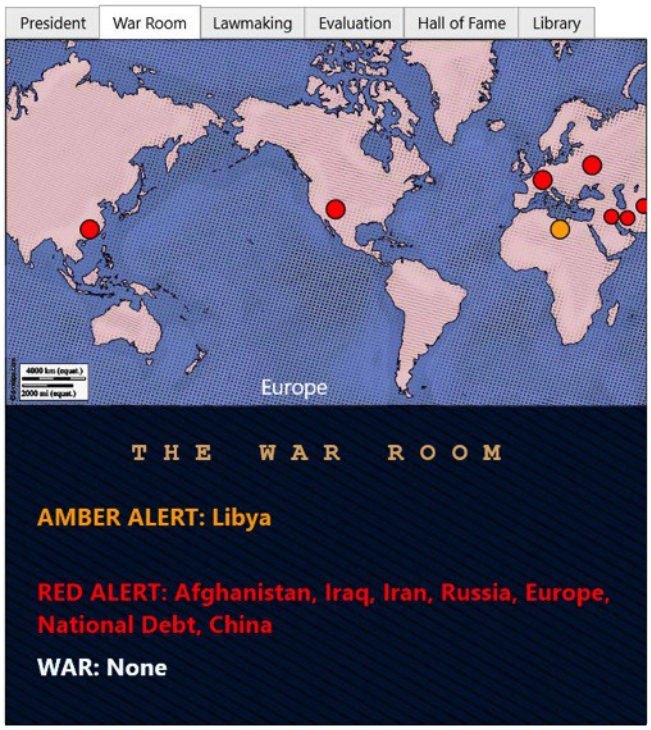
The economic model and alternative history scenario was developed by Pavel Kohout, who also ran the coding. For more information please contact pavel.kohout@protonmail.com

Graphic layout and illustrations: Dana Hejbalova and Dominik Hejbal.

THE ADMINISTRATION MENU

President

This tab shows you the name, the portrait and political affiliation of the current President.



War Room

The desired state of affairs is no amber alerts on the world map, zero red alerts and, of course, no wars. Not easily achieved!

Lawmaking

To make things simple, we'll put highly political "hot potatoes" such as capital punishment, gun control and abortion aside and focus on tax law.

Every year and every presidential term, new tax law proposals or amendments are drafted, voted on in Congress, and signed by the President. The number of new laws is huge, as is its volume in paper. For tax code alone, this grew from 26,300 pages in 1984 to 74,608 in 2016, according to global information services company Wolters Kluwer.

Complexity inevitably brings about loopholes and concessions for privileged groups (large corporations in particular). This, however, is balanced by higher compliance costs for the non-privileged, which inhibits entrepreneurs from engaging in new business ventures.

In general, tax law complexity is not desirable. A complex tax system is a tall hurdle for business – small businesses in particular.

On the other hand, powerful corporations and political interest groups that have supported your political career will expect you to sign loopholes and concessions into certain laws. It should come as no surprise that a major company expects a politician to sign a "tailor-made" law proposal in exchange for financial support.

How you solve this dilemma is up to you.

NB: The impact of legal and regulatory complexity should never be underestimated:

"*We estimate the effects of federal regulation on value added to GDP for a panel of 22 industries in the United States over a period of 35 years (1977–2012). (...) With the model's parameters fitted to real data, we confidently conduct counterfactual experiments on alternative regulatory environments. Our results show that economic growth has been dampened by approximately 0.8 percent per annum since 1980. Had regulation been held constant at levels observed in 1980, our model predicts that the economy would have been nearly 25 percent larger by 2012 (i.e., regulatory growth since 1980 cost GDP $4 trillion in 2012, or about $13,000 per capita).*"
Source: Bentley Coffey, Patrick A. McLaughlin and Pietro Peretto. "The Cumulative Cost of Regulations." Mercatus Working Paper, Mercatus Center at George Mason University, Arlington, VA, April 2016

Evaluation

How do we evaluate a President's performance? Economic growth, employment, inflation, debt, international power, financial crises (or the absence of them), domestic and international security; all these are part of it. So be a wise statesman – avoid conflicts if possible, or face them bravely if you have to – and your performance will be appreciated by history if not by your contemporaries.

The composite scoring function used in this game will give you an idea as to how great or

miserable a leader you are. (Terrible score? Don't worry. Great statesmen sometimes make great mistakes.)

Hall of Fame

A great President can go down in history. If your performance ranks among the world's best, you could enter the Hall of Fame.

Library

The President's Library is a list of books that will enhance your knowledge of politics, public administration, economics, international relations, and strategy. If you actually read the books from the list, you could probably beat your opponent in a TV debate when you run for President one day.

Good luck!